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STEPS TOWARD

AN ADEQUATE U.S. OVERSEAS *Information Program*

by EDWARD L. BERNAYS

RECENT demonstrations against the United States in Paris, Beirut, Rangoon, Jakarta, Algiers, Tokyo and South America have focused intense public interest on the overseas information activities of the United States. Many in and out of government are reappraising the program's part in our foreign relations.

Four years ago some thirty of us in the public opinion field formed a committee to advance America's overseas information program. We chose the name "National Committee for an Adequate Overseas U.S. Information Program." Admittedly cumbersome, it described our intentions. The word "adequate," particularly, conveyed the difficulties the U.S. faces in its overseas information program. Realistically, we could work only for an "adequate" program. This limitation stems from the nature of our free, highly developed, democratic society and from other causes. Many complex and diverse problems must be solved if we are to make progress—problems semantic, historical, ideological, practical, technological, organizational, political, economic, human and otherwise.

With all the difficulties, I am surprised we are doing as well as we are —a by no means adequate performance. Only a revolution in the thinking and action of the American people will improve those aspects of the operation which can be improved. Nothing should be permitted to stand in the way of such improvement. An examination of the problems may help the American people to understand them better and to make a start toward betterment.

Problem Number One

Problem number one deals with semantics. We call the activity "overseas information." We do not mean overseas information alone. We mean a program to influence people's opinion and attitudes in support of the United States through the planned distribution of facts and ideas. Congress and the Executive Branch of the government in the last decades have not come to grips with this reality behind the nomenclature.

Uncertainty about nomenclature has prevailed since the Committee on Public Information first undertook such activity in World War I. In World War II, as in World War I, despite vital national need, odium attached to those who did this work. When later we adopted propaganda as a peacetime effort, as a normal part of our U.S. diplomatic relations and foreign policy, we still had compunctions about the ethics and propriety of trying to influence foreign peoples, and whether our government should use a weapon nowhere mentioned in the Constitution. We assuaged our sense of guilt by calling what we did information. Giving out factual truth or information was part of the democratic doctrine. It relieved us of moral responsibility in trying to influence other people. Yet social science has found that one man's truth may be another man's untruth.

For our national purpose facts are facts and truth is only truth when they are accepted by others. Of course, we as a nation must be concerned in using only truth. But to make the truth meaningful and acceptable to those to whom it is projected, we must use it effectively. Fuzziness exists as to what this instrumentality we call U.S. overseas information really is. The Administration, Congress, the Agency and our people are obfuscated about the operation. Those at whom we aim our activities are aware of its purposes.

What Should Be Accomplished?

A second problem is overcoming ignorance of Administration, Congress and the people as to what such activity can accomplish. Often accomplishments are expected that are outside its scope. In 1954 a report of the Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Overseas Information Services of Great Britain assessed the value, actual and potential, of overseas information. Its conclusions, based on the sheer weight of evidence, found overseas information played an *essential* role in the foreign policy of England and other great powers. The Commission said, ". . . a modern government has to concern itself with public opinion abroad and be properly equipped to deal with it . . . information services must today be regarded

as part of the normal apparatus of diplomacy of a great power." It pointed out that "propaganda is no substitute for policy or for military strength, economic efficiency or financial stability" and that it is as easy to underrate the potentialities of such a program as to overrate them. The effect on the course of events of such a program is never likely to be more than marginal, it said, but "may be decisive in tipping the balance between diplomatic success and failure."

These conclusions, yet unrecognized by many of our policy makers, apply with equal force to our own overseas information services. At Congressional appropriations hearings a Congressman will ask why money is needed for activity in a country where the U.S. position has deteriorated due to a force majeure of events. Overseas information is not regarded as a normal continuing function of foreign relations. It is often thought of only as an ad hoc innovation to fight Communism in the cold war.

Increased Support

A third problem is how to increase Congressional and our people's support. Congress' support is proportionate to the people's, a truism of representative government. Our young country places reliance on material strength, neglecting reliance on ideas, in international relations as in education. Ignorance, suspicion, skepticism and fear of overseas information intensify this negative attitude. Our experience has conditioned us to abhor propaganda: the German prior to World War I, the Communist of the Bolsheviks during and after World War I, Hitler's world-wide propaganda, Mussolini's fascist, Japanese co-existence propaganda in World War II, and the ever-rising tides of Communist propaganda today. We are concerned lest our own government use this tool to try to control the minds of men here. We fear the possibility of a breakdown of the competition of ideas in the democratic market place of ideas, though we don't seem to mind commercial advertising propaganda.

Our moralistic viewpoint that propaganda is not truth militates against our support of the overseas information program. And we cannot understand why there should be one Voice of America when our tradition always calls for many voices.

People who support an overseas information program often do so for the wrong reasons—that people overseas become our friends if they know us better; that the more we communicate, the better the results; that information serves the function of persuasion; and that gifts make friends.

A fourth problem is that of making our national policymaking leaders more aware of the importance of shaping their foreign policy deeds in

ways to affect foreign attitudes favorably. The propaganda impact of the substance, timing and method of government foreign policy is important. What our government does is always more important than what it says. A goodwill tour that turns into an ill will tour is unsound foreign policy and poor propaganda.

A fifth problem is to make Americans aware that what happens in this country shapes attitudes of foreigners toward us. Foreign policy begins at home. We as a nation are judged by the attitudes and acts of our people in relation to the national ideals we profess. News flashed to the world of an Indian ambassador mistreated in a Texan airport because of his color or a Pakistanian diplomatic corps member arrested as a gypsy in a Westchester suburb may be more potent in conditioning foreign attitudes than foreign policy statements of a Secretary of State. Little Rock, a *Confidential* trial and bombings of Negro homes and Jewish synagogues in the South play their parts in our losing prestige in other parts of the world.

A sixth problem is determination of the content of our messages. We must know what we want to communicate. What is the America we want to project? Is it the America of the conservative or progressive; of long-hair artists or of comics and rock and roll; is it urban or rural; technological or idealistic? How should our unresolved controversial issues be treated, whether of reciprocal trade treaties or international policy? And what criteria should govern content that may be critical of the Administration in office, Congress or other powerful interests? Granted the program is nonpartisan and objective, by what criteria are ideas and facts to be chosen and presented from the welter of ideas around us? Multiple truths vie for attention. Which shall be selected? Research may answer the question as to the kind of information that has impact and on whom. We still have to decide on content policy. Certainly, dynamic ideas like those of Thomas Jefferson, Woodrow Wilson and other great American leaders have a place on any program. And it is obvious that the organization carrying out policy should be independent, free of politics, red tape and bureaucracy.

A Balanced Picture of U. S.

A seventh problem is shaping the program to present a balanced picture of the U. S. Most people get their image of the United States through private commercial communications channels. News media, American and foreign, radio and press, present us to the world in symbols that do not necessarily present a balanced image. A deviant happening in Kentucky or

Wyoming may, through distribution by wire, radio, mail or word of mouth, affect our country's reputation in Iraq. Unofficial voices from America constantly affect the changing image the minds of men get of us—movies, books, comics, our products wherever used, over a million tourists a year abroad, a half million American residents abroad, and the members of our government personnel abroad, military and civilian. The members of the foreign diplomatic corps here and the impression of America that foreign students and travellers bring back to their homelands affect our prestige. Activities of American private overseas information agencies play a part: Radio Free Europe to satellite countries and Radio Liberation into Russia. Any official U.S. agency has the almost impossible task of trying to keep the image of the U.S. well defined and balanced, in competition with these myriad other impacts on foreign people, but without duplication.

An eighth problem is that of resolving competition of official propagandas of our allies with our program. No coordinated approach has been worked out between our official Agency and those of our friends. At times, when there is a difference of policy between us and our allies, we may become the target.

Obtaining Qualified Personnel

A ninth problem is how to get the best possible personnel into the Agency, from administrator down through the ranks. Administrators have been appointed who were not the best qualified men available for the job. Men from advertising, news magazines, diplomacy, higher education and the business side of broadcasting have headed the program. Naturally, they did the best they could. Often it was not good enough. No one may be the perfect man and have all the requisite qualifications. But certainly a lifetime of executive and administrative practice in the arts of persuasion would appear to be a prerequisite. He should certainly be an intellectual with respect for the social sciences—cultural anthropology, sociology, public opinion, etc. He should certainly be versed in foreign affairs, a diplomat and politician in the broadest sense. He must be imaginative and courageous. The Administrator is not always chosen because of his fitness for the job.

Equally difficult problems are involved with the ten thousand individuals in the organization. Status and tenure are uncertain today. There is no independent career service. Many staff members have only limited qualifications. A recent report of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Information states: ". . . certain areas are understaffed while others may well be overstaffed. Greater critical attention should be given to the Agency's

personnel policies and practices, as well as to the quality and quantity of the personnel itself." The report finds weaknesses in training, particularly in language training. "The Commission strongly re-states its belief in the necessity for a long-range training program for Agency personnel." Practical-minded administrators shy away from "intellectuals" and do not harness the knowledge of social scientists and of area and communications experts to the activity.

The Role of Research

A tenth problem is research. In this pioneering work, continuing thorough research into area and political conditions, human behavior and output is a prerequisite. A pig in a poke is no international bargain. Research can help define the Agency activities, what we say, whom it reaches, under whose auspices it should be said. Research can help define the nature of the best interpersonal contacts, the tone of the message, the part the fight against communism should play, the media to be used and the program's effectiveness. Research can help define the assumptions on which the Agency proceeds. We must be sure the assumptions on which we are working are proven assumptions, if possible; that all work in accord with them. At present in the Agency many staff members often make their own assumptions without regard to their proven validity. If there were comprehensive research, the Agency and thousands of people in it would know the assumptions they were working on, were valid.

Some research is carried on. The program, social scientists maintain, calls for a much more comprehensive research.

Policies decided on after research should be clearly stated and made applicable to all people in the Agency concerned with them. When there is inadequate research, consistency in practice should prevail.

Needed New Facilities

Problem eleven is providing adequate physical facilities for the transmission of our messages. Needed facilities in radio include the improvement of present equipment and additional facilities, to meet Communist propaganda efforts. Television facilities and activities need long-range expansion, so essential in the envisioned world-wide TV communications network. According to the latest U.S. Advisory Commission on Information report, ". . . the Agency has been unable to develop an imaginative and constructive TV program" and ". . . to use effectively a powerful new medium that is gradually spreading around the world, namely, TV."

Problem twelve is how a democratic overseas information activity can most effectively counter the monolithic propaganda of Soviet Russia. Their

attacks on us are based on falsifications, distortion and deception. Their accusations confuse the world and weaken our prestige.

Totalitarian Soviet Russia coordinates deed and words at top level to carry out national policy. The Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party works with Agitprop, the planning group immediately beneath it. Foreign policy and propaganda programs are decided on to affect the attitudes and actions of people throughout the world. Soviet Russia adds censorship, a controlled press, lies and double-dealing as instruments of national policy.

How Communists Function

Communist parties and Communist fronts carry forward the Communist line on a world-wide basis, among them 40 international front organizations, including trade unions, teachers', lawyers', scientists' and women's groups. Many publications, newspapers, picture magazines, books are sold at low prices; exhibits and trade fairs are held. Travels of artists, scientists and technical experts propagandize the Communist doctrine. Soviet Russia is run as a propaganda apparatus, with 375,000 propagandists full time, according to a Senate Foreign Relations Committee report; with 2,100,000 part-time propagandists and with 7,000 Soviet newspapers as part of the domestic machinery. The budget is estimated to be several billion dollars. This is tough competition, aided by economic penetration and political subversion and other weapons in the cold war.

Problem thirteen is how to assure the U.S. an enlarged, stable and continuing budget to cope with its overseas needs. Some experts believe the budget should be a billion dollars, ten times the present amount spent. A billion dollars is a small sum for the insurance values such a program offers. One company, Unilever, spent £83,000,000, approximately $232,000,-000 in advertising last year, communicating with 1,800,000,000 consumers in the free world. We are trying to reach about 1,000,000,000 more people.

Congress does not reflect a continuing planned informed approach in appropriating funds. A timid administration that fears the antagonism of individual Congressmen may lower its budgetary requests, beyond a necessary minimum. A Senator McCarthy makes the Agency a whipping boy and can cripple it for a time.

Present Size of USIA

The Congress appropriated some $100 million last year for the United States Information Agency. It has 10,000 personnel, with information missions in 79 countries and a total of 193 information service posts; 155 Information Centers in 64 countries; 77 Binational Centers in 25 countries; radio transmitters at 7 locations in the United States and at 10 over-

seas locations; motion pictures—about 1,100 program films in USIS film libraries, 2,542,275 books in USIS libraries, of which 1,764,191 are in English and 778,084 in translations; 22 bookmobiles; 68 magazines or editions of magazines produced abroad—18 in English and 50 in foreign languages. The Agency also produces two English and one foreign language publications in the United States for overseas use. The Agency has complete radio teletype facilities at 79 posts for receiving the Agency's wireless file; and has 225 exhibits of a permanent nature. With these resources, human and mechanical, it is trying to do a job in the broader frame of reference we have outlined.

The conduct of our foreign policy is so complex that no one individual, no matter how potent, can effect overnight change to solve the solvable problems.

In a democracy, fortunately, this condition is subject to change if public understanding and support can be aroused. Public understanding and support is a prerequisite to an adequate U.S. overseas information program. We know the thoughts and actions that guide our people in respect to overseas information cannot be changed overnight. We need public reorientation. That takes time. But enlightened men and women can help improve the situation.

A First Step

As a first step, they can urge Congressional hearings by the Senate Foreign Relations or the House Foreign Affairs Committee to give public visibility to the issue to develop serious understanding of the issue. Experts would give testimony on the scope and function of the Agency and the problems it faces. Then democratic processes would be put in motion to cope with them.

A great voluntary national group comparable to the American Association for the Advancement of Science might arise from such hearings to support a continuing educational and information program.

Other voluntary bodies, like the Foreign Policy Association, The League of Women Voters, World Affairs Councils could be enlisted to use the great channels of public information and education to inform and educate the public and its leaders.

Nationwide interest would resolve many of the problems discussed. The semantic difficulties would be clarified. The objective would be defined to the Administration, Congress and the people alike. The support of Congress and the people would be ensured. Policy makers in their foreign policy actions would give greater attention to propaganda considerations. We

would learn that foreign policies begin at home. Content of a program would be defined as a result of debate and discussion.

Use of Private Channels

The ideas, news and facts that flow from America to other countries through private channels would, of course, continue. More balanced presentation should result from heightened responsibility of media. There would be little difficulty in cooperation and adjustment with friendly countries. Public understanding and support should ensure that organization and execution of information, policy and strategy is at a high level. Recognition of program importance should trade up the personnel of the Agency. Educational facilities to train recruits and ensure them adequate rewards, status and tenure would be stimulated. Social scientists would participate in such a program.

Public understanding would ensure from Congress enlarged budgets, continuous and stable, and the provision of enlarged technological facilities. And we would have a more potent and efficient organization to meet false Soviet promises and pronouncements.

An official United States overseas information agency is vital under today's and tomorrow's foreseeable world. Problems to be overcome will not be solved quickly or completely. The Agency's effectiveness will always depend on how sound our national policies are. International persuasion is only one of the instruments of national policy. It must be coordinated with the highest policies and actions of our government. If international persuasion were based on clearly defined, sound national policy and backed by Congress and the people, results would obviously be more effective. Everyone interested in our survival can play a part in stimulating the public and private action to bring this about.●

* * *

PUBLIC RELATIONS PRAYER

"Direct, O Lord, all Thy Holy Inspiration—for surely, Lord no one needs Thy inspiration more than we do.

"Make us, we pray Thee, accurate and truthful, and make our service to our client worthwhile.

"And grant, we pray Thee, a special blessing to our clients.

"Give them the grace of condescension in overlooking our faults — and the grace of light in acknowledging our merits.

"Make them less inclined to complaints—more callous to rebukes, and less critical of misprints.

"Watch over our struggles on earth—and may we meet in everlasting peace. Amen."

—Invocation given by The Most Rev. Timothy J. Flynn, Director of The Office of Radio and Television Communications, Archdiocese of New York, at the Testimonial Dinner for James Macwithey, President of the American Public Relations Association, at the 14th International Conference, April 30, 1958, New York.

Further Comment

RE: "International Networks: PR's Golden Age," by David L. Lewis, October, 1957

FROM: Eliezer Whartman, Director, Public Relations, Gordon Lewensohn Aylon, Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel.

"As a public relations and advertising firm doing business in Israel, we noted, with a great deal of satisfaction, the phenomenal growth of the international PR networks which was described in your very informative article. . . .

"However, while we were impressed with the growing trend toward internationalization, we are frankly a bit concerned about the fact that none of the listed networks seems to have an affiliate in Israel. . . . It's true that we may be small, but we're growing fast, and the first international PR firm that moves in will have the field to itself. . . .

"During the last nine years Israel's population has more than trebled. . . .

"Israel's soaring imports are expected to top $400,000 this year. . . .

"The number of foreign firms selling goods and services to Israel is increasing at a fantastic rate. Such giants as General and Alliance tires, Kaiser-Frazer and Renault cars, Vespa scooters, Hudson pulp and paper, Solar Steel Co., Philco, etc., have established factories of their own. . . .

"Israel's foreign trade has likewise burgeoned and this year exports should exceed $100,000,000. . . .

"Among our accounts we list such companies as El Al, Israel National Airlines, General Electric, Autolite, Lodge, Fiberglas, Bristol Aircraft, the Palestine Economic Corporation, Landseas Eastern, Alitalia, the Italian National Airlines, Sol-Peck (Solar Steel and Pecker) and a host of other domestic and foreign enterprises. We are also affiliated with the Grant Advertising Co., of the United States."

* * *

RE: "Are Examinations the Path to Professional Status?" by Hal D. Steward, October, 1957.

FROM: Howard Stephenson, Chairman, Division of Public Relations, Boston University.

". . . it would be most desirable to require examinations for membership in a professional public relations association on the part of a junior or associate member. The experiment of the British Institute of Public Relations is setting up an examination system that deserves very careful and sympathetic attention on the part of American public relation societies.

"As for the State taking over the responsibility of examining candidates for the practice of public relations I am completely opposed to any such movement. The practice of public relations involves the gathering and dissemination of information and thus is concerned with freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Any infringement of these freedoms should be met with vigorous resistance on the part of public relations people. It does seem to me that any licensing to practice public relations implies this kind of infringement."

* * *

FROM: Eric Williams, Honorary Press Officer, The Institute of Public Relations, London, England

"Hal D. Steward's challenging article . . . was very interesting to those members of the Institute of Public Relations who were fortunate enough to read it.

"It is heartening to know too that the Institute's system of examinations introduced last year has proved so stimulating.

"One or two points deserve clarification, however. For instance, should membership qualifications of a body of PR people be through experiences or academic achievement?

"The Institute believes firmly in both qualifications. Already full membership is restricted to those who satisfy the close scrutiny of the Membership Committee as to their competence and integrity—and who have been engaged in full-time, comprehensive PR work for not less than five years.

"A qualification of three years' comprehensive experience will still be necessary in future for those who wish to take the Institute's final examination.

"Why hold examinations? The practice of Public Relations in Britain is fast developing and the Institute realizes that there is an obvious need for competent training. Members of the I.P.R. have always believed in sharing their skill and experience. By such a means as courses of study for these examinations, this skill and experience can be most effectively passed on to students.

"Thus equipped, they will then more fittingly enjoy their three years' practical experience before being eligible for full membership in the future.

"As for being Public Relations professionals, those of us who consider the term carefully will apply it cautiously to ourselves at this stage. Surely it is not what we call ourselves that matters, but the description of us by others which our work alone deserves.

"With best wishes for the success of pr and its stimulating comments."

* * *

RE: "PR Builds U.S. Sales and Goodwill," by Joe Jones, April, 1958.

FROM: Alejandro Orfila, Director of Public Information, Organization of American States, Washington, D. C.

". . . As Public Relations Director of the Organization of American States, I am concerned daily with public relations work in the international field; I feel that Mr. Jones' article has contributed greatly to a better understanding of the very important role played by public relations on an international level. I wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Jones that through a positive PR approach new markets can be opened and better results of a sales drive can be obtained. I also believe that public relations is the answer to better mutual understanding between the different countries and that it offers an opportunity to consolidate efforts to bring about better business and higher levels of living. The article has brought to light a comparatively unknown angle of PR practice and I am very happy to see it appear in our Quarterly Review."

BACKGROUND STATEMENT
for
"NOTES ON JUDGE CLARY'S OPINION"

(Article begins on page 13.)

Nature of suit	Civil action under Sherman and Clayton (antitrust) Acts.
Designation	Noerr Motor Freight, Inc., et al., Plaintiffs, vs. Eastern Railroad Presidents Conference, et al., Defendants. Civil Action No. 14715.
Plaintiffs	Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association and, originally, 37 individual trucking companies, several of whom later withdrew.
Defendants	Eastern Railroad Presidents Conference and (remaining after dismissals) 24 railroad companies, several individuals connected with railroads, and Carl Byoir & Associates, Inc.
Alleged Damages	$250,000,000 (treble damages)
Summation of charge	The truckers charged a conspiracy by Eastern railroads to monopolize the transportation industry. The suit asked for an injunction and treble damages.
Date filed	January 17 1953.
Where filed	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia).
Judge	Honorable Thomas J. Clary, Jr.
Trial	Began October 1, 1956. Evidence closed January 23, 1957. Briefs and other documents filed April 5, 1957. Opinion handed down October 10, 1957.
Findings	Defendants found guilty of violation of antitrust acts.
Present Status	Consideration of costs and damages to be awarded before the Court. Final decision expected at any time.
Appeal	An announcement has been made that an appeal will follow the rendering of a final decision by Judge Clary.
Public Relations Firms	For the railroads: Carl Byoir & Associates, Inc. For the truckers: Allied Public Relations Associates, Inc.

PUBLIC RELATIONS ON TRIAL . . .

Notes on *Judge Clary's Opinion*

by EDWIN C. KEPLER

TO a public already sensitized by such novels as *The Hucksters* and *The Build-up Boys,* by such terms as "engineering consent" and "manipulation of public opinion," and by five percenters and influence peddlers who choose to call themselves public relations men, the suit brought by Pennsylvania truckers against Eastern railroads appeared to confirm popular apprehensions about public relations. It triggered an emotional response, particularly among public relations people themselves, that has tended to obscure certain of the more meaningful aspects of the case.

The story of the public relations activities leading up to the suit has been widely, but only partially, publicized. Typically, the early publicity dealt with the allegations in the depositions and centered mainly on the more sensational charges. Prohibtions customarily set by legal counsel during litigation prevented—and continue to prevent—public explanations being offered by those against whom the charges and counter-charges were lodged. The Opinion, widely publicized and circulated, of course dwells chiefly upon the evidence and interpretations which led Judge Clary to find against the defendants. Little in it is favorable to them, except as relates to the finding that the weight of the evidence did not support the charge of bribery and corruption of public officials.

But the full story as thoughtful students of public relations would want to know it—the story of exactly what was done, how, and for what reasons— remains largely untold. It is available, buried in some 6,000 pages of evidence and 968 exhibits, awaiting only the enterprise of someone who understands public relations to translate it into a definitive work.

The "notes" which follow have a much more limited scope. They relate only to considerations raised by the Opinion itself, discussing them as a series of abstract points more or less detached from their context in the suit. They were written without partisanship and without intended judgment regarding the accuracy of the statements presented during the

trial, the conduct of the trial, or (with one exception as to the term "big lie") the opinions of the Court. They were not written by a lawyer as a brief on the law involved, but by a public relations man, acting individually, as a possible contribution to that larger discussion of public relations problems which is so evidently and vitally needed.

It is only fair to observe that the public relations problems highlighted in this case were not created by the principals to it. The "techniques" condemned by Judge Clary have been—and are—practiced by others under the banner of public relations. And, as the Opinion notes with reference to the Byoir campaign, they were employed in this instance "under the guidance of competent legal counsel. . . ."

Finally, it must be said that Judge Clary's Opinion—on which these "notes" are based—may be reversed by a superior court on appeal by the defendants, in which case a part of what follows will obviously lose whatever validity it may have. But only a part. The moral and ethical questions concerning the employment of certain techniques loom larger than the shadow of this suit. The Opinion merely gives them substance and increases the urgency of arriving at solutions to them.

What are the more meaningful aspects of the Opinion? Seven have been selected for discussion here.

1. The involvement of public relations in antitrust litigation.
2. The findings as to public relations activities in general.
3. The question of truth and half-truth.
4. The use of third party "fronts."
5. The question of disclosure as regards editors and writers.
6. Implications of injunctions against public relations activities.
7. Financial hazards to public relations counsel in cases of this nature.

Public Relations and the Antitrust Laws

1. Of key importance is the fact that for the first time a finding has been made that public relations activities, if used to destroy the good will of a competitor, may be held to be in violation of the Sherman and Clayton Antitrust Acts.

The unprecedented nature of the case is noted in the Opinion: "The factors bringing about the present action are new in the field of antitrust litigation."

Later: "This was a deliberate attempt to injure a competitor for an illegal purpose by destroying public confidence in it."

The "illegal purpose" was spelled out as follows:

> The Court has found as a fact that the railroads and Byoir entered into a conspiracy in unreasonable restraint of trade, the nature and purpose of which was to injure the truckers in their competitive position in the long-haul freight industry in the northeastern section of the United States. This, of course, involves interstate commerce. The immediate purpose was to create public resentment to the truckers, not only in the minds of the general public but in the minds of those who utilized the services of the trucks and in such a manner as to interfere with business relations between shippers and truckers.

An argument advanced by the defendants was that their purpose was not to destroy the trucking industry but to influence legislation in several states in ways which would, they held, redress certain competitive inequalities and serve the public interest. In support of this purpose, they pleaded their constitutional rights. The argument was denied.

> The distinct impression of the Court, sitting as a jury, in drawing the inferences from the evidence presented, is that this was a carefully calculated plan under the guidance of competent legal counsel which sought to choose a means of injuring and, if possible, destroying interstate truck competition that would afford the greatest amount of constitutional protection and thereby seek to render it immune from the coverage of the antitrust laws. A further inference to be drawn is that the plan was to be cast in the guise of a gigantic legislative campaign in order to attempt to surround it with the protections of the right to assemble, the right to petition the legislature and freedom of speech.

Thus, the charge of destroying the good will of (and public confidence in) a competitor may, if upheld on appeal, join the growing list of activities that may be judged a conspiracy in unreasonable restraint of trade under the antitrust laws.

Two questions come to mind. Is it possible that filing antitrust suits on the grounds that a competitor is destroying one's good will may itself become a "technique" for influencing public opinion? And will a rash of similar suits break out, resulting in still other black eyes for the public relations field?

At least one suit apparently based on the precedent established by the railroad-trucker case has appeared in court. It was filed in Washington, D. C., last November by an association of dairy cooperatives and two dairy co-ops against the National Tax Equality Association, an organization that has been working for equal taxation of cooperatively owned enterprises engaged in processing and distributing operations in competition with privately owned businesses.

Also named as defendant in the dairy suit is a Washington public relations firm employed by NTEA. The complaint charges that the firm

"prepared and distributed press releases, speeches, cartoons, pamphlets, and other material disparaging cooperatives and designed to undermine the good will and public relations of cooperatives and to create public resentment against them, all for the purpose and with the effect of restraining trade in interstate commerce by destroying or weakening competition between cooperatives and noncooperative business enterprises."

Just what all of this portends for the future of public relations remains to be seen. It may be stated categorically, however, that the more public relations becomes involved as the central issue of litigation, the less likely is it to be popularly regarded as a socially desirable instrument of public enlightenment and understanding.

The Findings as to Public Relations in General

2. "Public relations techniques," the Opinion states at one point, "are closely woven into every facet of this case."

A point to note, however, is that Judge Clary did not hold public relations or any particular public relations activity to be unlawful per se.

> The Court is not condemning the field of public relations. It is only condemning it as it was used in this case, as an instrumentality of destruction rather than one of promotion. Neither does the Court determine it illegal for an industry to seek any and every proper legislative goal; nor to enlist the support of others in obtaining legislation. But it is illegal to use the practices and methods shown by the record of this case to destroy a competitor's good will and to use third parties as fronts to carry out a conspiracy to destroy a competitor.

Of particular interest is his ruling that the legality of an activity may depend upon whether or not it is carried on "defensively."

> The record discloses that both sides used, or wanted to use, fronts and/or the propaganda technique. However, there is one very important distinction in the use of the technique by the parties; *the plaintiffs always used the technique for the affirmative purpose of seeking legislation which would be beneficial to themselves rather than to burden the railroads.* . . . The plaintiffs engaged in the negative approach (which seeks to injure your competitor) only as a *defensive* measure after they were severely hurt in the public mind and the legislative halls by Byoir and the railroads. (Italics and parentheses Judge Clary's.)

Thus, a tax manual prepared by the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association was found to be "purely defensive" and "within the rule of reason in free competitive enterprise," even though it constituted, in Judge Clary's words, "a frontal attack upon the railroads" by indicating that railroads were not paying their full share of taxes. The Court observed that no attempt was made to conceal the origin of the manual and that "its purpose was to counteract the propaganda of the railroads."

As to the question of how public relations activities stand with respect to constitutional freedoms, the Opinion reads:

> As has already been stated, this is no attack upon public relations or the achievement of a legislative goal through publications, speeches, press releases, or the alignment of friends to seek to accomplish a valid legislative purpose. But when these resources are utilized for the purpose of applying the great power and wealth of group action against a competitor in order to accomplish an illegal objective—the monopolization of the long-haul freight business—they become something more than mere freedom of speech, freedom to assemble, or freedom to petition legislature—they become an illegal conspiracy.

Whether or not, in statements such as these, Judge Clary offers clear guidelines as to the legality of particular practices in public relations campaigns involving a contest of competitors over a public issue, the reader must discover from his own legal counsel. The layman is apt to become confused, particularly if he attempts to factor in the question of what bearing the truth or falsehood contained in material disseminated has upon the question of legality.

But to a layman it appears evident that the Opinion is not a blanket condemnation of public relations and, in fact, has little to do with what most of us do from day to day as we earn our living in this vocation.

The Question of Truths and Half-Truths

3. Of particular interest to public relations practitioners is the Judge's characterization of a certain type of activity as the "Big Lie."

> The chief device used by the railroads, and to a lesser extent by the plaintiffs which latter did not involve violation of the Sherman and Clayton Antitrust Acts, is one long known to political experts under the term, "The Big Lie." This technique, as it appears from the evidence in this case, has been virtually adopted in toto by certain public relations firms under the less insidious and more palatable name of "The third-party technique." Its sole means and its effectiveness is to take a dramatic fragment of the truth and by emphasis and repetition distort it into falsehood. That was the technique employed almost without exception by Byoir and the railroads.

As an aside, it may be pointed out that in accepted terminology of propaganda, the "big lie" technique relates not to the use of third parties and not to emphasizing "fragments of the truth" but to the size of a lie. One may accept Adolph Hitler as an authority on this subject. In *Mein Kampf* he wrote, "In the size of the lie there is always contained a certain factor of credibility, since the great masses of the people will . . . more easily fall victims to a great lie than to a small one."

But the inappropriateness of the appellation "Big Lie" is not important. What is important is whether or not the use of partial truths and of third parties (two distinctly different things) is proper in public relations. We are now discussing ethics, not law.

Considering now only the question of "half-truths," an approach would be to point out that one (but by no means the only) function of a public relations man is that of an advocate, one who is hired to plead the special virtues of his client's cause or product. In this, his function is not unlike that of a trial lawyer or a salesman.

Is it the obligation of a lawyer to tell the "whole truth" about the shortcomings of the man he defends or the virtues of the man he prosecutes? Is it the obligation of the salesman to relate the superior features of his competitor's products?

Following this line of reasoning, is it not in accord with the mores of our society for those who are hired advocates to present the best case possible for their clients, recognizing a moral obligation merely to refrain from statements that are in themselves demonstrably false? And if this is the accepted standard for advocates of other sorts, should it not be a permissible standard for public relations practitioners when acting as advocates?

The trouble with this reasoning is that the lawyer, salesman and public relations man do not present parallel cases. The lawyer has considerable latitude in what he says because he must confront an opposition lawyer who is there, on the scene, ready to challenge the facts and opinions he expresses. The salesman may not confront a competing salesman, so he is confronted by a body of law on the subject of misrepresentation and fraud, including the fraudulent use of half-truths. The public relations man, on the other hand, frequently is in a position to disseminate facts and opinions that cannot then and there be challenged (and may never be) and with practically no formal restraints over the truth of what he says. He is an advocate of a special sort, one whose activities as yet have been but little circumscribed by institutionalized restrictions and whose license is as broad as the privilege of free speech.

Walter Lippman states in *The Public Philosophy*[1] that freedom of speech is a self-evident necessity in society only as a means of attaining truth and is worthwhile only if, in fact, it performs that purpose. It performs best when it employs the method of dialectics—that is, when ideas

[1] *The Public Philosophy*. By Walter Lippman. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1955. p. 124 ff.

are confronted with other ideas, when verification can be demanded, and in general when the conditions of debate exist.

"If there is not effective debate," Mr. Lippman says, "the unrestricted right to speak will unloose so many propagandists, procurers, and panderers upon the public that sooner or later in self-defense the people will turn to the censors to protect them."

Of course, many examples can be advanced to show that public relations is often used as an instrument in furtherance of public debate, to educate people and promote understanding. But this blanket hardly covers the whole bed. It does not cover a situation in which a skillful, organized, whirlwind campaign encounters no organized, or even vocal, opposition. Neither does it cover the use of forms of deceit to obscure, confuse or misrepresent an issue before the public.

The concern here is not so much over the philosophic and perhaps unanswerable question "what is truth?" but over recognizable forms of deceit, including the "truthful" reporting of rigged surveys and statistics and the withholding of information which, if released along with the partial truths that *are* told, would lead reasonable men to arrive at different conclusions from those they could arrive at on the basis of the partial truths given them.

The right of freedom of speech can never be taken as a license to deceive, Mr. Lippman says. "It is sophistry to pretend that in a free country a man has some sort of inalienable or constitutional right to deceive his fellow men. There is no more right to deceive than there is a right to swindle, to cheat, or to pick pockets."

From all this, it would follow that the place public relations earns for itself in society will depend largely upon its ability to make positive contributions to effective debate on public issues. This ability will depend not alone on the improvement of technical skills, but even more importantly upon the ethical standards public relations sets for itself, the respect it demonstrates for truth, and its power to police itself in such matters.

As a footnote, it should be observed that the foregoing has not been written in direct reference to specific details of the trucker-railroad suit. The matter of truth is raised a number of times in the Opinion, but just how it bears on the findings of the Court is a question for legal counsel.

Problems of Non-Attribution and Third Parties

4. As a reading of the Opinion suggests, the term "third-party technique" may cover a wide variety of situations. In many cases, the

question of propriety does not arise over third parties as such, but over the related question of non-disclosure of originating sources or principals.

One line of argument is that non-attribution and the use of third parties are historic and established practices in American life. Founding Fathers such as Hamilton, Madison and Jay published many of the Federalist Papers, anonymously, or under pseudonyms, in order that their ideas might receive unprejudiced reception. Many different kinds of agencies today work for undisclosed principals, as when a real estate agent contracts to buy property on behalf of an anonymous purchaser. Many accepted, reputable and nominally "independent" foundations, research groups and "educational" organizations are supported by special groups such as labor, business and political parties, and, while they do not actually hide the source of their support, they usually take no particular pains to point it out to those who use their services. So, this argument runs, why should not public relations follow these established practices?

It seems reasonable that public relations should not be precluded from legitimate use of "fronts." Suppose, for example, you advise a wealthy client to handle his charities through a special corporation ("front") in order that each gift may not seem to be an attempt to "buy" public esteem. Would that be any less proper than the advice of a lawyer who urges precisely the same thing to obtain tax advantages?

Nor does there appear to be any question about joining forces with a third party—say, an established, well-known organization—that, out of common interest with your cause and for purposes of its own, chooses of its own accord to cooperate with you and to speak out in its own name in support of your cause.

Other possibilities are less clear. What about an instance in which you reactivate a defunct organization, building up its membership, furnishing it with funds, and employing it for your ends? What about a case in which a group of like-minded people voluntarily form an organization at your behest, a bona fide membership organization, but one that operates under your direction, with your funds, solely to advance your mutual cause? What about the case of a recognized expert in a particular field who agrees to speak in his own name on behalf of your cause if you pay his expenses? Should disclosure of your role be required in these instances?

In attempting to arrive at a position in such matters, is it adequate to say that whenever an individual (or organization) freely and voluntarily chooses to support a particular cause on his own responsibility and in his

own name, no stigma is to be attached to prompting his interest in the first place, to furnishing him with information, and to paying his expenses when he acts at your behest to further your cause?

Of course, certain possibilities are self-evident deceits. These would include such practices as having hirelings pose as "disinterested parties" or setting up paper organizations pretending to membership that does not exist. But between such activities as these at one extreme and cooperation with legitimate allies at the other, there appears to be a grey area for which generalizations are inadequate. In this area, the ethical question becomes one of intent, bearing in mind the words of William Blake:

> A truth that's told with bad intent
> Beats all the lies you can invent.

A seemingly simple test may be applied: If what you are doing today were reported *in full* on the front page of your local newspaper tomorrow, would you or your client be embarrassed or injured? Prudence, if not conscience, ought to warn a practitioner away from any activity failing that test.

Ethics in Dealing With Writers and Editors

5. The matter of inducing free lance writers to prepare articles favorable to one's side and of interesting editors in printing them also receives Judge Clary's attention. The "method of operation was to interest an editor of a magazine in a story and if the editor thought it had sufficient merit he might assign one of his staff writers or editors to do the piece," whereupon the writers would be furnished "with the data which Byoir had compiled, which data of course was always slanted against the truckers."

In this, it would seem that the question of disclosure is relatively minor. Free lance writers and editors have their own tests of whether or not material is suitable, and they bear their own responsibility for checking facts and opinions. When such publications as *Harper's, Reader's Digest, Country Gentleman,* and *Saturday Evening Post* take a position with respect to a controversial subject, it may be taken for granted that they determined their position by themselves in the light of their own purposes and responsibilities. The public relations firm that happens to be on the favored side is thereby proven fortunate, but not necessarily influential, regardless of whether or not it prompted the editor's interest and supplied him with material.

Newspaper editors have well-used means of checking authenticity

and it is their responsibility to do so when they are not familiar with the sources of news sent to them. This was a rule of newspaper life long before public relations entered so prominently into the picture.

It is almost axiomatic that any public relations firm that has prospered over the years must have earned a reputation for reliability and fair play with editors. This is not to say, of course, that an editor's confidence has never been abused or might not be again. But the fact that public relations in general has greatly increased its acceptance and stature with editors of all types testifies to the rarity of such abuse. Successful public relations firms are quite willing to tell editors who their clients are and to answer such related questions as may be put to them. On this score, it appears sound to say that today's customary practices meet ethical requirements quite satisfactorily.

Injunctions in Restraint of Public Relations Activities

6. An extremely interesting aspect of the case is Judge Clary's ruling that "Injunctive relief is granted to all plaintiffs and is to run against the ERPC and all corporate defendants, including Byoir . . . " The Court said that "there is a strong possibility that the defendants are ready, willing and able to continue with their campaign to destroy the good will of the long-haul trucking industry unless they are restrained."

On this point, a member of the Philadelphia Bar and former professor of law, Laurence H. Eldredge, wrote in *The Sunday Bulletin,*[2] "Such a prohibition against the publication of statements and photographs in a campaign to mold public opinion on a question of public interest raises grave questions of fundamental public policy."

Mr. Eldredge, who was not connected with the case but was sought by the *Bulletin* to write a special article about it, advanced these thoughts:

> The right of freedom of expression, subject to liability in damages for abusing that right, is so fundamental that Chancellor Walworth held in 1839, in the celebrated case of Brandreth v. Lance, 8 Page 24, that he could not enjoin the defendant, a business competitor of the plaintiff, from publishing the most vicious libel.
>
> Chancellor Walworth said: "It is very evident that this court cannot assume jurisdiction of the case presented by the complainant's bill, or of any other case of a like nature, without infringing upon the liberty of the press and attempting to exercise a power of preventive justice which, as the Legislature has decided, cannot safely be entrusted to any tribunal consistently with the principles of a free government."

While the willingness of a Court to grant an injunction restraining

[2] *The* (Philadelphia) *Sunday Bulletin,* October 20, 1957.

the issuance of press releases and so on is of obvious significance to public relations, Mr. Eldredge's comments indicate that it may be of even broader significance to the country as a whole.

Financial Stakes in Antitrust Suits

7. The possible financial hazards of undertaking what Judge Clary termed "the negative approach" toward a competitor becomes a new consideration in public relations counselling. Antitrust suits are usually lengthy and expensive. (The Byoir organization says it has spent nearly $400,000 in its defense to date.) On top of that lies the possibility of having to pay damages to the plaintiffs.

In the case at hand, the truckers sought to recover triple damages (permitted under the Clayton Act) of $250,000,000. The Court awarded only nominal damages of six cents each (tripled) to the trucking firms, but said he would grant additional damages plus attorneys' fees and court costs to the Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association.

Of particular interest is his stipulation that the Byoir organization pay 20 per cent of the total, "which 20% shall not be reimbursed by ERPC nor by any defendant railroad or railroads."

At the present writing, a final decision regarding injunctive relief and costs and damages is expected from Judge Clary at any time. Public relations practitioners will want to study it with care.

Conclusion

Whether upheld or reversed in higher courts, Judge Clary's Opinion must be regarded as a significant development in the history of public relations. The case as a whole deserves much more thoughtful study and reflection by public relations practitioners than available evidence suggests has been given it. Perhaps it constitutes a warning for the future.

It appears quite evident that public relations is destined to play an increasingly important role in American life. It represents a creative response to a real need in our society. And it has grown into a skillful and important industry.

But with growth and skill comes power, and with power comes responsibility. The courts and legislatures act as society's watchdogs. They are a means of seeing that power is not misused and responsibilities are not neglected.

It would seem reasonable to anticipate that public relations will come increasingly under the purview of the courts and of legislators in the years ahead. How well it fares will depend, in part, upon how sensitive it is to such possible harbingers as the trucker-railroad suit. ●

The Editors' Page

When you open a corner of the public relations box it seems that everything tumbles out. Take professionalism, for instance. The mere mention of the word profession evokes every conceivable reaction, from those who think we are a profession, to those who not only think we aren't, but never will be—or even ought to be. Those who believe, as we do, that public relations is a recognizerd field aspiring to professional status, are also divided. We have proponents of state licensing, private licensing, examinations, certifications, and just plain good deeds.

Take public relations conferences and meetings. No matter how carefully the program chairman has done his job, no matter how skillfully the program has been presented, the audience will be divided. To some the program is elementary and to others it's too lofty and abstract.

In our opinion the disagreement is not as simple as "nuts and boltsers" versus "deep thinkers." There's a place for both. What is reflected here is a great gap between the levels of understanding, and sophistication, and years in the business. In short there is no common core of knowledge generally recognized as being possessed by all members in the field.

One reason why we have the present disparate situation is that some people have read books in the field and others haven't.

With the recent publication of the first comprehensive bibliography of public relations literature it's out on the table. All of us in public relations, regardless of age and experience, now can consult the same sources, now can proceed from the same bench mark. We venture this observation: If every person in public relations used the bibliography for reference—read one recent text book—read one book relating the social sciences to public relations—and then read currently the three public relation periodicals (weekly, monthly, quarterly) we would attain a working level of knowledge which would save us a lot of breath defining and redefining what we are trying to say. If this were done we could have the first floor completed while the advance guard is working on the roof.

Having delivered ourselves of this pronouncement we make this offer. If there are any newly arrived among us who would ponder what books and what periodicals, please write the editors without fear of embarrassment. The reply will be sent in a plain envelope. ●

scanning

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS

Each quarter Dr. Donald W. Krimel selects items from professional journals in the social sciences which have implications for the public relations field—Ed.

MOTIVATIONAL RESEARCH; A SOCIAL SCIENTIST'S VIEW

"Why the Edsel Laid an Egg; Motivational Research vs. the Realty Principle," by S. I. Hayakawa, Language Arts Division, San Francisco State College, in *ETC.: A Review of General Semantics,* Vol. XV, No. 3, (an international quarterly concerned with the role of language and other symbols in human behavior and human affairs, official organ of the International Society for General Semantics, 400 West North Ave., Chicago 10, Ill.)

When the techniques and the findings of the social scientists are packaged and sold as a commercial product, obviously the seller is subject to dangerous temptation. The social sciences deal with man and with man's inter-relationship with man. The nature of man being still largely a mystery, the techniques and the findings of the social scientists are necessarily very questionable indeed. Normally they are described in professional journals. A very specialized readership makes the proper allowances, still thinks the material interesting, and continues to support, however niggardly, these journals.

But try to sell the social sciences package to the business man, in a competitive market, and the temptation looms to dress it up prettily for the consumer. Too often the contract is likely to go to the commercial social science research organization that implies it has solved the mystery of man's nature, or which is ready, possibly, to come forth from the maze with answers that support the business man's wishes.

This is an extreme picture, of course. Many a business man is equipped to buy intelligently in the market of commercial offerings of social science techniques and findings. He, or a staff man in whom he has confidence, is sufficiently acquainted with the social sciences to know the genuine product, respect its limitations, use it with restraint. Then too, some commercial social scientists try hard to keep their product respectable.

Hayakawa, long and well known as a semanticist, hits upon this general situation in a discussion of the motor car market. He starts with the feeling that today's cars are over-priced, over-powered, over-sized, and over-elaborate. Why? He lays it to "the assumption apparently held by car-makers . . . that *the majority of the population is mentally ill.*"

This, Hayakawa believes, is because the car-makers have been listening too long to "the motivation research people." These he defines as "those harlot social

scientists who, in impressively psychoanalytic and/or sociological jargon, tell their clients what their clients want to hear, namely, that *appeals to human irrationality are likely to be far more profitable than appeals to rationality.*"

In effect, Hayakawa says that while the motivational research boys are finding our secret fantasies and basing their marketing advice on them, they are failing to recognize—in defiance of the teachings of the Freud so many of them admire—*the rational factor in man's motivations.* The fantasies are there in every buyer, and it is even possible that the MR commercial packagers have done an accurate job of describing them, but, as Hayakawa points out," . . . *only* the psychotic and the gravely neurotic *act out* their irrationalities and their compensatory fantasies."

He writes, of course, of those who act them out in the extreme, and such persons we classify as mentally ill. Most of us act them out when we can, but check each move against our rational motivational machinery. "It doesn't take a social science genius to point out that the more expensive an object is, the more its purchase compels the recognition of reality."

Thus MR's version of the nature of Man the Consumer could be right when you're selling cigarettes, but wrong when you're selling a $3,500 automobile. Asks Hayakawa, "Will Ford be able to survive another round of good advice such as they got on the Edsel?"

REACTIONS TO "THE BRASS"

"Upward Communication in Experimentally Created Hierarchies," by Arthur R. Cohen, Yale Communications Research Program, Yale University, in *Human Relations,* Vol. XI, No. 1, (a quarterly journal of studies towards the integration of the social sciences, available through Robert Brunner, Inc., 63 Fourth Ave., N. Y. 3, N. Y.)

Summarizing the results of a research project such as Cohen's is bound to result in over-simplification. Allowing for that factor, here are some generalizations suggested by the Cohen report:

1. When high ranking people have general status plus power (control over need satisfaction), people of low rank consistently communicate upward in ways calculated to curry favor. But this reaction is much less notable in persons of low rank *for whom advancement is impossible* (Low Non-Mobiles).

2. Status alone does not produce the above pattern in clear form; status and power together are necessary.

3. When disturbed, Low Non-Mobiles tend to become more distant from and hostile toward the high ranking people. In contrast the Low Mobiles, when disturbed, curry favor harder.

4. Low Non-Mobiles communicate with each other at greater length and more freely than do Low Mobiles.

In sum, if an employee feels that promotion is possible, he is more likely to talk to the bosses and curry favor, less likely to resent the bosses, overtly or covertly, and less likely to communicate easily with people on his own level. The bosses must be so both in title and in actual power over the individual employee, for this to be the case. The public relations man with employee relations experience may have supposed all this, of course; the social scientist, tentatively, confirms it. ●

A FORUM DISCUSSION . . .

Reporting to Management

by JEROME E. KLEIN

WHAT problems do public relations men and women encounter in "reporting to management?" Are there any regular practices which should be followed, any special form or content of the reports?

Recently, with the assistance of Jac A. Cushman, Public Relations Director of the American Gas Association, I conducted a forum discussion of this subject. Forty participants were brought together by the Greater New York Chapter of APRA in one of a series of workshop sessions. There was unanimity among the workshop members on one point only: that it is the responsibility of the public relations administrator to report regularly to his management. But as to the form, content, and method of his report we could not agree.

The differences in opinion probably reflected the interpretation of his own role by each of the participants. Some were public relations directors within companies; others, account executives in agencies; still others, trade association public relations directors or executive secretaries; and the rest, staff members having definite opinions, but no administrative responsibilities.

At the start, we found that the discussion participants had a number of different ideas about who management is. The image in the minds of the participants ranged from the President-boss picture (for a public relations man who worked for a medium sized company and reported directly to the president) to an image of the 350 top management people in a large, far-flung company who in greater or lesser degrees guided the destiny of the company and could retard or develop a successful public relations program. These "management" executives were mostly on a lower level than the public relations administrator, but some were above, or at least on an equal rung, on the company organization ladder.

Next, some of the participants represented public relations agencies,

where management was of two kinds—the agency head (or account executive) and the client. Some represented associations, where management again was double barreled in their minds—meaning, on one hand, the association officers and board (or director), and, on the other hand, the heads of the individual member companies.

Who Is "Management"?

We reached no agreement at the forum on who "management" is. In the context of our discussion I offer this working definition of management: "those individuals in a company (organization or association) who are interested in the workings of the public relations program, knowingly or unknowingly, and whose daily work enables them to control company policies and individuals toward the advancement or detriment of the company's relations with the public."

The Purposes of Reporting

After defining management, we had to decide, the session felt, on why we should report to management. Here, too, we encountered a varied assortment of opinions ranging from "don't report unless asked; you only invite trouble" to the other extreme—"report regularly, at least once a week, as personally as possible, so that you get *them* on the public relations team."

There is not a bit of doubt that to whom you report and how well depends upon a number of factors, among them the accessibility of "management"; the budget allowable for effective, informative presentation; the time you as a public relations department head feel is necessary to give to reporting what you do.

Taking the last factor first, most of us seemed to agree that it is necessary to take time out from doing the job in a public relations department to compile statistics on what you have done, and to present them in some palatable form to the people who are paying the bills. The aim is neither to brag about what you have done nor to convince the client or the boss that he's getting his money's worth. The primary purpose (and some feel this should be subliminal) is to put management to work for the public relations betterment of the company—to implant in the minds of management the fact that for every company action there is a public reaction. The idea is to get management to function in the public interest at the same time they are functioning in the interest of company earnings. If, through your reports, they begin to understand your public relations way of thinking, and begin to adopt at least a portion of that thinking as their own, then you have earned your keep.

Although the above paragraph expresses the opinion of most of the participants, the fact that there are now more of us in public relations than ever before indicates that more in management appreciate the uses of public relations. In fact, many management people understand our role better than do some practitioners.

The second important reason for reporting regularly to management is to keep yourself and the people in your department on their toes—not that they should work so that the report will look pretty, but rather so that they will have regular opportunities to review what they are doing, evaluate whether the results are worth the efforts, and suggest to you new approaches, new methods of achieving better results with less effort and fewer expenditures.

How Elaborate Should Reports Be?

Yes, the budget does, in most instances, determine how effective you can be in making your report to management. Reports can take many forms. Some members of the discussion group seemed to feel that the least expensive would be the most effective—that is, a two or three hour verbal report by the public relations executive to the top company executive once a week.

Others felt that this would be fine under certain circumstances, two of these circumstances being that only the company president would be interested in the public relations program and that it would verbally filter down through the company. Most forum participants believed that this would be unlikely.

No Agreement on Frequency

Most participants felt that a regularly issued, detailed, brief, statistical, easy-to-read report should be prepared by the public relations administrator and that this report should be sent to every executive in the company in an administrative capacity who can influence the public attitude toward the company for better or for worse. Some even felt that all employees, through a column in, or a supplement to, the employee publication, should receive a steady barrage of material which would indoctrinate them in the public relations philosophy of the company.

How often should this regularly issued report be sent to all company administrative people? We conducted a poll of sorts on this, with these results:

Not at all—2 Once a week—8 Twice a month—6
Once a month—18 Every three months—3
Every six months—2 Once a year—4

So we can hardly say that there is agreement among public relations people as to when, or how often, it is the function or duty of the public relations administrator to report to his management. Most participants felt that a four or five page mimeographed report, broken up with headings, statistical tables, and some marginal notes, would be every effective. Some members of the group, particularly those representing associations having many member companies, thought that a four to eight page, nicely printed, illustrated, chart-filled report was vital and necessary. They seemed to feel that the report not only must state what has been done for the members by the Association's public relations setup, but provide ideas and program theme guidance for the coming period.

Some of the participants, particularly those representing agencies, said that reporting to the client-management must be more dramatic—and more costly. They seemed to prefer (or feel necessary) a semi-annual meeting with client-management representatives, where, during a two-hour to a full-day meeting, they provide the client visitors with an exhibition which includes slides, thoroughly animated and documented presentation charts, verbal presentations by some of the staff, a folio of exhibit materials, and further documentation.

Contents of Report

What should be reported? There were no organized impressions on this question, but among the items thrown out for inclusion were these: results of surveys and studies among the public; the stories or case histories of community projects and special events; a listing of the newsmaking events of recent occurrence as well as those to come; quotes of all types from letters and articles to and about the company; charts showing employee and executive participation in community events; recognition in various forms of outstanding public relations achievements of individuals and/or of particular units — just to mention a few of the suggestions.

There was some expression of emphasis upon publicity results. Some felt that whenever there is mass publicity coverage on a project, resulting in many hundreds of clippings, these clippings should be collected and all of them reprinted by offset, attractively bound, with an introduction explaining the objective, the results and the great value of all of this space given by the press of the nation. It was felt that this need be done only occasionally but that management should be impressed with the fact that this is but one exhibit of many possible. Others felt that simply reprinting a page or two of some of the publicity received on a par-

ticular project and including this as a supplement to a weekly or monthly bulletin would be equally effective.

There is no doubt that, as some said, it would be ideal if the president of a company would lend his ear for two to three hours a week to the public relations administrator so that he could tell him what has happened that week, what he is planning for the next few weeks, and what the company is doing good or bad in a public relations way. But, not only is this impossible for the president of a large company, it is unfair. What the public relations director can say in two to three hours can be summarized in a three to five page bulletin, which the president can read in less than half an hour at a time of his own choosing. He can pick up the telephone and call the public relations director if he wants any questions answered. Some of these answers may require research and documentation on the part of the public relations director. He can furnish these in a memo to the president within a few days. Also, the writtten report allows all administrative people within the company to know about the public relations activities and program, and they in turn should feel free to ask questions to clarify their role in this program, or to ask for help, or to submit their own ideas in connection with it.

Points of Agreement

We agreed on several basic points.

First, we felt that business management generally knows very little about the day-to-day detail work of a public relations department; that management generally doesn't begin to know the thousands of little ulcer-irritants they are saved from by a public relations department's skillful handling of calls passed on to it by a telephone operator or the mail room chief who knows, from experience, that if no one else can handle it—whether it be a request for information or a complaint—the public relations department will do it—satisfactorily. Management doesn't begin to know the many hours spent in researching a fact, in contriving an approach, in giving a genuine news slant to a dull routine story, in handling the minute personal problems of hundreds of executives who know of no one else to turn to for advice, guidance, know-how, and a program of action.

Second, we agreed that public relations people are becoming professionals in the handling of these problems and that some appreciation of and recognition for all of this effort in behalf of the good name of their companies should be given, but generally is not. In fact, generally, the opposite is so. Because public relations has long been looked upon as a

most exciting, perhaps *the* most exciting part of business, envious people in routine operations within the company welcome opportunities to attack and belittle public relations department errors—picking upon one out of many thousands of little details handled by the public relations department and magnifying it out of all proportion, and thereby feeling that they, by contrast appear to be a more valuable, although less colorful, service to the company.

Unless the company administrators themselves have worked in bona fide public relations operations, they cannot be expected to know well the varied details being handled. It therefore becomes necessary to substitute for that lack of experience the writtten or oral report—which, if done regularly, gives them as good as possible a working knowledge of what public relations handles and does for the company day by day.

Management Should Insist on Reports

It is my belief that management should welcome, even insist upon, frequent reports from the public relations chief.

First, public relations is a long-range achievement influenced by day-to-day decisions. Top management, knowingly or not, is a part of that day-to-day building of a public attitude and must, therefore, be informed daily of the functions of the public relations operations.

Second, management, too, has as its responsibility the transmitting of its decisions, plans, philosophy, policies to the public relations department both for an honest criticism or recommendation and for an informed, fruitful handling by the department of the interpretation of these decisions to the company's various publics.

Third, an active, aggressive, creative and imaginative public relations department has nothing to hide, is proud of its daily accomplishments in behalf of the company it serves, and has every reason to make these activities known to the company's administrators. Only when there is no activity and no accomplishment, need a public relations chief be afraid to report.

It is true that because the activities are so multifarious and sensitive, there are more chances of occasional errors or mistakes—and reporting will show up some of these—*but a truly enlightened management never neglects to rate the accomplishments of a public relations department in several thousands of things done over the negative criticism of a half dozen things done incorrectly.*

To summarize the forum, we can say that the majority felt that reporting to management regularly is a function and duty of a public relations administrator. ●

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CLAIMS THAT MAIM

THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY
By J. K. Galbraith
Houghton Mifflin, Boston: 1958, 356 pp., $4.75

EFFECTIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS
By S. M. Cutlip and A. H. Center
Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: 1958, 2d ed., 438 pp., $9.00

Any gathering of two or more businessmen is likely to produce at least one chorus of the old-time favorite, "I ain't got nobody (and nobody cares for me)." But if, despite the best efforts of his public relations men, the businessman remains unappreciated, it may be because his goal of increased production at all costs is at odds with the changing goals of society in general, a view supported by the fact that public relations counselors seek to emphasize the broad social responsibiliites of business. This is the joint message of the two books under review.

First, as an example of the old refrain expressing incredulousness that the public is not more appreciative of business, turn your hymn book to the Reynolds Girdler article which appeared in the *Saturday Review* last April 19. The claim staked out by Sinclair Oil's Director of Public Relations and Advertising is a large one:

"Throughout the ages the businessman has helped build civilization's great cities, provide people with luxuries and artists with patronage, and lift his fellow citizens to undreamed-of standards of living. In the last few centuries, the businessman has seeded the Industrial Revolution around the world." Unfortunately, the reaping has been grim. "He has seldom been able to win friends or influence people . . . general misunderstanding and unpopularity harass the spirit of the average American businessman . . . antagonisms have been endemic in all society."

And finally, Mr. Girdler's public relations nostrum for the businessman's headache: "Can the American businessman match the simple, direct weapons of his antagonists? Precedent suggests an affirmative answer. The men who built the first big American companies were masters of simplicity. They organized a company, they selected a trademark, they devised a slogan. And in the limited media then at their command, they launched these simple words and symbols, and repeated them, and repeated them *ad nauseam,* until they became part and parcel of the lives of everyone who lives today."

"The Affluent Society"

Ad nauseam indeed. The profession of public relations has a right to expect from practitioners of Mr. Girdler's experience something more than an unsupportable giant-sized claim, especially when there is a thrilling record of business accomplishments to relate. Not "throughout the ages," but since World War II, inequality has largely been abolished. There are, to be sure, pockets of poverty but these, as J. K. Galbraith points out in *The Affluent Society,* are largely due to the isolation of communities (even within large cities) that have been unable or unwilling to provide necessary public services like housing and education. Increases in the standard of living are virtually incomparable with pre-war rates. Socially responsible corporate managements are voluntarily assuming obligations that were once thought to be the sole province of "impractical do-gooders." And the examples of laudatory business accomplishments such as these are endless.

But in an insistence on the all-embracing claim, in the use of such unfortunate phrases as the "engineering of consent" and in the attempt to identify public relations with particular economic interpretations, public relations becomes a patsy for what amounts to "Public Relations Confidential" literature (Vance Packard's recent articles in the *Atlantic Monthly*[1] and the *New York Times Magazine*[2] are typical). Its business clients are likely to be caught with their claims down by the countervailing wordmanship of a Galbraith.

Professor Galbraith is a knowledgeable ideaman with a copywriter's skill. His *The Affluent Society* is less an intricate thesis and more a series of essays devoted to the demolition of what he calls the Conventional Wisdom, the "acceptable ideas [that] have great stability. They are highly predictable . . . sound . . . provide inertia and resistance . . . makes vigorous advocacy of originality a substitute for originality itself . . . avoids accommodations to circumstances . . . is always in danger of obsolescence."

[1] May, 1958
[2] May 11, 1958

One consequence of the Conventional Wisdom is that we stake everything on the Dependence Effect. " . . . wants are increasingly created by the process by which they are satisfied. Increases in consumption, the counterpart of increases in production, act by suggestion or emulation to create wants. Or producers create wants through advertising and salesmanship. . . . Wants thus come to depend on output." There is, therefore, a vested interest in production shared by all groups, liberal as well as conservative. For production takes care of the older concerns for security as well as equality. But with little concern for kinds of goods and only for totals, the affluent society runs into imponderables.

Task of Public Relations

The picture that emerges of the businessman, liberal or conservative, is of a carrier of the Conventional Wisdom who has come to view production as an end and consumption as a means. Galbraith says that "the first task of the public relations man . . . is to 're-engineer' his [business client's] image to include something besides the production of goods. His subject must be a statesman, a patron of education, or a civic force."

Finally, in what Galbraith sees as the emergence of a New Class that gets its satisfactions more from an enjoyment of working and less from income, he points to an increasing need for investment in human resources. This is his Design for Progress, for education is the primary qualification for admitttance to the New Class. "Why should men struggle to maximize income when the price is many dull and dark hours of labor? Why especially should they do so as goods become more plentiful and less urgent? Why should they not seek instead to maximize the rewards of all the hours of their days? And since this is the plain and obvious aspiration of a great and growing number of the most perceptive people, why should it not be the central goal of the society?"

That many orthodox economists will quarrel with the reasoning and conclusions of *The Affluent Society*, or that it will be judged unsound, will detract little from its persuasive effect. If it becomes a rallying point for the disenchanted, the public relations practitioner whose business clients have already been identified in the public mind with the robber baron or the irresponsibilities of rugged individualism is going to find himself severely handicapped, regardless of whether those clients are trade associations, national corporations or small businesses.

"Effective Public Relations"

As ideas fly, it is not a very long hop from *The Affluent Society* to

a searching statement of the emerging principles of public relations and an instructive guide to its practices. For if there is a dominant lesson in Scott Cutlip and Allen Center's completely rewritten edition of *Effective Public Relations*, it is that public relations is evolving on the side of responsibilty. From a first-edition definition that emphasized winning support and influencing confidence, Cutlip and Center now see public relations as "the planned effort to influence opinion through acceptable performance and two-way communications." This theme is re-emphasized and supplemented in each of the book's five major parts and in virtually every one of its twenty-eight chapters. For example:

On persuasion—"The suggestion is more likely accepted if the source is perceived as truthworthy or expert."

On research—"Objective research serves as a shoehorn for putting on the other fellow's shoe. It provides an effective stimulus to self-correction."

On communication—"The facts of the story should be told continuously, clearly and candidly. Those who seek to withhold the facts of their story must reckon with the practical certainty that the story will somehow be circulated."

On press relations— " . . . confidence is compounded of a record of accuracy, integrity and performance."

But *Effective Public Relations* is not a sermon. It is instead an authoritative textbook for the student and an instructive handbook for the practitioner. That Cutlip and Center have chosen to emphasize the ethical side of the profession must obviously reflect a need. In their own closing words: Public relations "can steadily advance toward a mature, responsible profession that contributes to the unity, progress and public welfare. Or it can decline into what Philosophy Professor William Ernest Hocking has described as a 'conscienceless publicity racket,' which brings the premiums of advancement to those who have 'learned to surround their doings with a cackle of ignorant noise.' *Those skilled in its techniques will have to decide which way it will go.*"

Surely the overambitious, unsupportable claim must ultimately deprive the profession of that choice. ●

—DON COLEN

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IN AND ABOUT THIS ISSUE

In this July issue **pr** deliberately breaks its own rules. From the beginning we have restricted the length of our articles, attempting to provide as much variety as possible within our space. We believe, however, and hope that our readers will agree, that we are justified in printing two "king size" reports because of the urgent messages for all of us in public relations. This decision has crowded out two other scheduled articles for which our apologies to the authors.

* * *

It is no secret that this nation's overseas public relations leaves much to be desired. In the spate of recommendations which have been aired publicly, surprisingly few have come from the public relations field. We are pleased to offer as our contribution a major discussion of the problems involved—"Steps Toward An Adequate U.S. Overseas Information Program" by **Edward L. Bernays** (page 1). Because of his close association as a participant in and observer of American overseas propaganda, Mr. Bernays is highly qualified in this subject. He was with the U.S. Committee on Public Information in World War I; in World War II he was called on as a consultant by many departments of our government; and he is chairman of the National Committee for An Adequate U.S. Overseas Information Program. His writing include the pioneering book **Crystallizing Public Opinion; Propaganda;** and **Public Relations.** He edited **The Engineering of Consent,** and is in the practice of public relations with his wife. Mr. Bernays last appeared in **pr** in the January, 1956 issue. ("What Do the Social Sciences Have to Offer Public Relations? An Interview With Edward L. Bernays).

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Judge Clary's Opinion in the "trucker-railroad" suit has produced an understandable emotional reaction within the public relations fraternity. **pr** takes no sides in this partisan controversy, nor do we desire to be caught in the crossfire of a fight which is not our concern. But we believe that the issues raised by Judge Clary's ruling are of concern to everyone in public relations and cannot be blinked away. This is the first time a finding has been made that public relations activities may be held to be in violation of the Sherman and Clayton Antitrust Acts. At least one other suit has since been filed.

Thus, while it is true that Judge Clary's Opinion may yet be reversed by a superior court, certain moral and ethical questions have been raised which deserve a thorough airing within our field. We hope that it will be obvious that "Notes on Judge Clary's Opinion" (page 13) is an attempt to analyze the significance of the Opinion, and not to retry the case. The analysis has been prepared by Associate Editor **Edwin C. Kepler,** acting as an individual, as a contribution to understanding the vital issues involved. Mr. Kepler wrote "Samuel Adams, Master Propagandist" in the April issue of **pr.**

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"Reporting to Management" (page 27) resulted from a forum discussion among forty public relations practitioners. The author, **Jerome E. Klein,** served as chairman of the forum. Mr. Klein is Public Relations Director of Lane Bryant, Inc. in New York, the national women's retail chain of 80 stores. Previously he was with Earl Newsom Associates. Since he joined Lane Bryant in 1946 his department has received two awards from APRA and one from the **Public Relations News.** Mr. Klein is a past president of the Greater New York Chapter of APRA.

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"Why the Edsel Laid An Egg" is the subject of a provocative article on motivational research reviewed by **Dr. Donald W. Krimel** in our regular feature "Scanning the Professional Journals." (Page 25)

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